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TAGS: [OVIP](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [ECON](#) [MASS](#) [KWMN](#) [KPAL](#) [WI](#) [MO](#)
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR THE SECRETARY'S VISIT TO MOROCCO

REF: A. RABAT 0719
[1](#)B. RABAT 0604
[1](#)C. RABAT 0374
[1](#)D. RABAT 0678
[1](#)E. RABAT 0859

Classified By: Ambassador Samuel L. Kaplan for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Secretary Clinton, we look forward to your return to Morocco. Since your visits as First Lady, and in particular in the ten years since King Mohammed VI ascended to the throne, the Kingdom has made great strides in promoting gender equality, sound economic principles, and religious tolerance. Your visit can lend valuable support to Morocco's ambitious reforms in the fields of justice and women's empowerment, encourage continued improvements in human rights, and highlight U.S. support for the Morocco's continued development. The status of the Western Sahara dominates the Government of Morocco's (GOM's) foreign policy, and public expectations are high that, during your visit, you will openly support Morocco's autonomy plan for the territory. END SUMMARY.

REFORM

[1](#)2. (SBU) Through an ambitious and continuous program of reforms, Morocco has become a leader in the Arab world in the fields of justice and women's empowerment. Major advances include the Arab world's first truth commission, a revised Family Code granting expanded legal rights to women, and growing government transparency and accountability. As a result of support from the Palace, Morocco now has more elected women officials than any other Arab country and has dramatically increased the visibility of women as leaders and policy makers (Ref B). Women also serve as religious leaders, educating women about their newly won legal rights and promoting a moderate and inclusive Islam (Ref C).

[1](#)3. (SBU) Recognizing that a weak judicial system remains an impediment to broader development and reform efforts, the King has called for a comprehensive overhaul of the judiciary (Ref A), including upgrading and expanding courts, increasing the number of judges, and raising the standards of training for judges and other legal professionals in Morocco. The GOM has made efforts to address corruption, creating a Central Commission for the Prevention of Corruption and prosecuting government officials complicit in drug trafficking and other offenses. Support and encouragement from partners like the United States is essential to ensure that such reforms, still not deeply rooted in law or Constitution, continue.

ECONOMY

[1](#)4. (SBU) The economy is relatively healthy, with growth expected to exceed five percent this year, but marred by increasing disparities in wealth. Morocco escaped direct damage from the financial crisis in 2008, but its balance of payments has suffered through the recession in Europe, the

most important destination for Morocco's exports and primary source of tourists and remittances. Since the 2006 implementation of our Free Trade Agreement (FTA), U.S. exports to Morocco have tripled, and Moroccan exports to the U.S. have almost doubled. U.S. firms are increasing their investments in Morocco, as they see the FTA develop new markets. The Department of Commerce's Commercial Law Development Program and the U.S. Trade and Development Agency conduct capacity-building and technical assistance projects to assist Morocco in creating an open and transparent business environment and developing fully its trading and investment potential.

U.S. ASSISTANCE

15. (SBU) U.S. assistance to Morocco is focused on four priorities: economic growth, counterterrorism, democracy and governance, and supporting quality education. This assistance takes the form of a USAID mission with a budget of USD 18 million, the world's second largest Peace Corps program with 210 volunteers, the Millennium Challenge Corporation's (MCC's) second largest Compact, and a variety of Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) projects. USAID supports Morocco's reform efforts in democracy and governance, economic growth (principally agriculture), and education. The five-year, USD 697.5 million MCC Compact supports five major projects selected for their potential to increase productivity and improve employment in high potential sectors of Morocco's economy: Fruit Tree Productivity, Small Scale Fisheries, Crafts, Financial Services, and Enterprise Support. MEPI programs include training for women political candidates in 2009's local elections (during which women's representation increased from 0.3 percent to over 12 percent), governance training for newly elected women politicians, breast cancer awareness, support for civil society and youth organizations, technical assistance to meet environmental obligations under the FTA, and support for far-reaching financial sector and central bank reforms through the Financial Services Volunteer Corps. Other USG-funded projects support the GOM's nascent judicial reform program, anti-corruption efforts (with the American Bar Association), and prison reform to counter extremism.

HUMAN RIGHTS

16. (C) Despite some setbacks, Morocco has significantly improved its human rights record over the last ten years and should be encouraged to continue this course. Morocco has actively sought to address past human rights abuses, including torture, with the goal of preventing future violence and restoring dignity to victims. Freedom of the press has expanded significantly, but restrictions remain, and those who challenge them can suffer heavy fines, libel judgments and more rarely, jail (Ref D). Morocco's press code permits the Government to seize publications that threaten public order or show a lack of respect for the royal family or Islam.

17. (C) Political freedoms have grown as well, but diverging from the GOM's position on the Western Sahara, or questioning the legitimacy of the monarchy or the Malikite rite of Sunni Islam, remains unacceptable. The human rights situation in the Western Sahara is similar to the situation in Morocco proper, with a reduction in serious violations and some increases in political openness. Known police abusers have been transferred out of the territory and those left behind increasingly respect human rights standards. Harassment of some independence activists continues.

MILITARY

18. (SBU) The Moroccan military has undertaken a sweeping effort to modernize its antiquated military force. U.S. Foreign Military Sales to this Major Non-NATO Ally exceed USD 3 billion, led by Morocco's purchase of F-16 and T-6 aircraft. Modernization further strengthens the Moroccan military by continuing and expanding exposure to U.S. doctrine, tactics, techniques, procedures and personnel,

increasing the Moroccan military's positive contributions to maintaining regional stability, combating terrorism and extremism, and responding to threats to peace and security. The Mission is working with the Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation to finalize a Moroccan role in the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI), including a peace operations training center in Morocco.

THE WESTERN SAHARA

¶9. (C) The status of the Western Sahara dominates Morocco's foreign policy to the exclusion of almost everything else. Even ties with Western Europe and the U.S. are built upon countries' support for Morocco's autonomy proposal. Until 2009, the U.S. vocally supported this proposal, which had been carefully negotiated with the Bush Administration. Expectations are high that during your visit, the U.S. will once again publicly support Morocco's plan for autonomy, and highlight the GOM's significant accomplishments in the Western Sahara. You should certainly voice support for the UN effort to achieve a settlement and for Ambassador Christopher Ross, the UN Secretary General's Personal Envoy.

¶10. (C) Morocco has invested tremendous resources in the territory, and some observers estimate that it spends USD 2.7 billion per year on the Western Sahara and its 385,000 residents. The level of development and social services clearly exceeds the level in Morocco proper. Extensive interviews in the territory suggest that the principal goal of most Sahrawis is self-government rather than self-determination; a desire for protection and identity instead of independence. The small vocally pro-Polisario minority, including many of the human rights activists, formerly enjoyed the support of the "silent majority" of these Sahrawis, particularly during periods of repression. Development and improved observance of human rights have reduced this support. Most Sahrawis in the territory have been intrigued by the prospect of autonomy (Ref E).

MIDDLE EAST PEACE

¶11. (C) Morocco can play an important, if secondary, role in Middle East Peace efforts, and will be eager to discuss this topic with you and Special Envoy Mitchell. The GOM is supportive of the Annapolis Process, has been a strong backer of President Abbas, and is perhaps the sole Arab state to refuse any dealings with HAMAS. It also has cordial, open and high-level, if irregular, contacts with Israeli officials. Moroccan Jews living in Israel, many of whom support Likud, maintain strong ties to Morocco. However, internal anger over last year's Israeli actions in Gaza forced the GOM and Palace to scale back their public engagement with Israel although back-channel communication continues. The King, as Chairman of the Organization of the Islamic Conference's Al-Quds (Jerusalem) Committee, is in a position to use his influence and good offices to positive effect, although his engagement through that committee has been inconsistent.

EMBASSY MANAGEMENT ISSUES

¶12. (SBU) This Mission of 380 urgently needs to construct a New Embassy Compound (NEC) in Rabat and new Consulate General in Casablanca. We own the land for the NEC, but we still need the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to confirm approval of our request to build a three-storey NEC. We would like to purchase one of two identified sites in Casablanca for the new Consulate General, and are similarly awaiting government approval for the purchase.

Visit Embassy Rabat's Classified Website;
<http://www.intelink.sgov.gov/wiki/Portal:Moro> cco

Kaplan